



Testimony of Robyn-Jay Bage, M.P.A., Chief Executive Officer  
Women and Families Center  
Appropriations Committee  
Public Hearing Re: Governor's Proposed FY 2018-2019 Budget  
Thursday, February 23, 2017

Good day, Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Robyn-Jay Bage, CEO of Women and Families Center, a nonprofit human service organization that has served Connecticut residents for over 125 years. Our mission is to promote equity and quality of life through services that foster empowerment and independence. Our sexual assault crisis services program is one of the nine community-based member centers of the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (formerly CONNSACS).

As a unduplicated provider of rape crisis services in a 28 town region, we provide short-term counseling, systems advocacy, hospital accompaniment, and a 24hr crisis hotline for victims of sexual violence and their loved ones. In addition, we offer training and education designed to prevent sexual violence.

Due to the economic climate of the past decade, our services have increased to include case management, helping victims to ensure their basic needs are met, such as food, shelter, clothing, and medical care. Please know that while we are not funded to provide this service, it is difficult for our clients to address the trauma of their sexual assault if they must simultaneously worry about feeding themselves and their families, or having a safe place to sleep at night.

WFC also has an expertise and focus on working with children, the elderly Latina population, and LGBT youth, all of whom are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and sexual violence. Latinas and LGBT youth are also largely underserved populations.

We recognize that the decisions you must make, as you convene to rectify the state budget deficit, are undoubtedly difficult. Please consider that additional cuts to funding for rape crisis intervention and prevention services would likely mean a reduction in personnel hours. This reduction would result in a decrease in the number of people served and scope of services we are able to offer. Fewer victims will receive the services they need to mitigate the impact of the trauma they've endured. Fewer victims will have access to all of the resources they need to heal.

The governor's budget recognizes the continued need for front line sexual assault crisis services and programs throughout our state. We ask that you keep the level of funding for rape crisis intervention and prevention services in the governor's budget, upholding the state's longstanding commitment to its residents to address sexual violence. Thank you so much for your time and your consideration.

Robyn-Jay Bage, M.P.A.  
Chief Executive Officer

